

# Public Assistance Made Available to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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## How the Public Assistance Process Works

**HARRISBURG, Pa.** – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced today that Public Assistance (PA) has been made available to Bucks, Chester and Montgomery counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Federal aid has been granted to augment state and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by Hurricane Ida. Additional counties may be designated at a later date.

All seven categories of PA (A-G) are now available to commonwealth and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a 75 percent cost-sharing basis for eligible expenditures. These may include emergency work, debris removal and repair or replacement of damaged roads, bridges and other elements of the infrastructure. Public Assistance funding also covers partial or complete repair of schools and other critical functions such as public water tanks or sewer systems. Projects will be approved only if they are necessary as a direct result of storm damage during the designated timeframe.

FEMA will pay 75 percent of the cost of PA projects; the remainder is the responsibility of commonwealth and local government and, in some cases, nonprofit organizations.

In cases where small improvements may reduce the risk of future disaster damage, FEMA may pay for cost-effective mitigation measures. For example, FEMA may cover the cost of such projects as increasing the size of a culvert if the increase could prevent future flooding. Otherwise, FEMA generally pays only to bring facilities back to pre-disaster conditions.

## Category A: Debris Removal



Removal of obtrusive items on public property, including trees, woody debris, sand, mud, silt, gravel, building components, wreckage, vehicles and personal property to eliminate an immediate threat to lives, public health and safety. An example of an eligible project is the removal of debris from a street or highway to allow the safe passage of emergency vehicles. An example of an ineligible project is the pre-disaster sediment from engineered channels.

### **Category B: Emergency Protective Measures**

Emergency Protective Measures are actions taken by applicants before, during and after a disaster to save lives, protect public health and safety, and prevent damage to improved public and private property. Emergency communications, emergency access and emergency public transportation costs may also be eligible. These can include such projects as search and rescue, sandbagging and removal of health and safety hazards.

### **Category C: Roads and Bridges**

Roads (paved, gravel, and dirt) are eligible for permanent repair or replacement, unless they are Federal-aid roads. Eligible work includes repair to surfaces, bases, shoulders, ditches, culverts, low water crossings and other features, such as guardrails. Damage to the road must be disaster-related to be eligible for repair. Eligible work includes repairs to such elements as piers and approaches.

### **Category D: Water Control Facilities**

Water control facilities include such elements as dams and reservoirs, levees and engineered drainage channels. Restoration of the carrying capacity of engineered channels and debris basins may be eligible, but maintenance records or surveys must be produced to show the pre-disaster capacity of these facilities.

### **Category E: Buildings and Equipment**

Buildings, including contents such as furnishings and interior systems such as electrical work, are eligible for repair or replacement. FEMA may also pay for the replacement of library books and publications. Removal of mud, silt, or other accumulated debris is eligible, along with any cleaning and painting necessary to restore the building.



If an insurance policy applies to a facility, FEMA will deduct from eligible costs the amount of insurance proceeds, actual or anticipated, before providing funds for restoration of the facility.

## **Category F: Utilities**

Typical Utilities include:

- Water treatment plants and delivery systems
- Power generation and distribution facilities, including generators, substations and power lines
- Sewage collection systems and treatment plants
- Telecommunications
  - Category G: Parks, Recreational Facilities and Other Items

Repair and restoration of parks, playgrounds, pools, cemeteries and beaches are eligible. This category also is used for any work or facility that cannot be characterized adequately by Categories A-F. Other types of facilities, such as roads, buildings and utilities, that are located in parks and recreational areas are also eligible and are subject to the eligibility criteria for Categories C, D, E and F.

Natural features are not eligible facilities unless they are improved and maintained. This restriction applies to features located in parks and recreational areas. Specific criteria apply to beaches and to trees and ground cover.

A detailed description of the seven PA categories is available online. Visit: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/program-overview>.

The state begins the PA process by announcing a schedule of briefings through which potential applicants are guided through the application process. A list of meeting places and times for each county will be announced within the next few weeks. During the briefings, specialists will describe the application process. After the general applicant briefing, each applicant will meet one on one with an assigned Program Delivery Manager (PDMG) at a scheduled recovery scoping meeting. The PDMG will contact their assigned applicants within one week after a request for PA is submitted. Applicants should contact their commonwealth Public Assistance Officer to arrange the first meeting if they have not heard from their PDMG within two weeks.



- Here's what to expect at a kick-off meeting

A PDMG will provide a detailed list of required records and can recommend ways of organizing them.

Applicants should be prepared to bring documents with them to their recovery scoping meeting, including a list of damages and a description of intended repair or replacement projects.

Applicants should try to identify circumstances that require special review, such as insurance coverage, environmental resource issues and historic preservation, and potential mitigation projects. The earlier these conditions are known, the faster they can be addressed, and they must be addressed before funding can be approved.

After the meeting, applicants will be able to contact their PDMG with any questions or requests for assistance.

Applicants are responsible for maintaining records of completed work and work to be completed.

For a complete list of frequently asked questions about the PA process, visit: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/program-overview>.

Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for all counties and tribes within the state.

For updates on the Pennsylvania response and recovery, follow the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency on Twitter [twitter.com/PEMAHQ](https://twitter.com/PEMAHQ) and Facebook <https://m.facebook.com/PEMAHQ/>. Additional information is available at [fema.gov/disaster/4618](https://fema.gov/disaster/4618).

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